



Federal Emergency Management Agency

Washington, D.C. 20472

March 18, 2002

The Honorable Sherwood Boehlert
Chairman, Committee on Science
U.S. House of Representatives
2246 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-3223

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The hearing on Wednesday, March 6th gave us both much to consider. I wanted to express my appreciation for the way in which you conducted the hearing. You indicated at the end of the hearing that you will call another hearing after the publication of the Building Performance Assessment Team (BPAT) report.

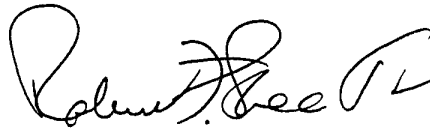
In order to have a productive second hearing, I would like to propose the following course of action, with your concurrence:

- 1) First, I will begin holding regular press availabilities in order to keep the public informed. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will work with your staff so that they may attend these briefings by phone. Dr. Arden Bement, Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) have agreed to participate so that we can give the public the most up to date information. Knowing your close ties to the families involved, as we prepare to do these press availability sessions, I would appreciate any insights or suggestions from your staff to include on the agenda, so that we are able to be the most proactive and thorough as possible.
- 2) Regarding the BPAT report, I have requested that the National Science Foundation (NSF) participate with FEMA, NIST and ASCE to conduct a broad review of the report in order to assure that the findings and recommendations for further study are comprehensive. On this panel, I have asked all of the witnesses from your hearing to participate, including Dr. Astaneh-Asl and Professor Glenn Corbett. Importantly, I have also asked Chief Ed Stinnette, a prominent Fire Chief, to participate in these efforts. This external review process will be completed in a timely enough fashion to hold to the prospective publication date of approximately late April.
- 3) I have spoken to Director Joe Allbaugh and he is committed to supporting a request for sufficient resources for NIST to continue the study effort this year.
- 4) Relying on an existing Memorandum of Understanding with the National Institute of Standards and Technology, Dr. Arden Bement and I have established a quick deployment mechanism for NIST to respond to another extreme event, for Presidentially declared disasters. Any deployment will be a joint decision between FEMA and NIST. Within two weeks this protocol will be captured in a revision to our MOU, as a short-term remedy.

I would appreciate the Chairman's concurrence in this course of action, or your guidance on an acceptable approach. Please have a member of your staff contact Vince Fabrizio in our Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs Office at (202-646-4500) so that we may proceed with your insights.

Please be assured that I share your concern that the Federal government develop a more comprehensive and coordinated process from which to better conduct the necessary research and investigation in the aftermath of tragedy to save lives in the future. I look forward to working with you and your staff in pursuit of this endeavor.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert F. Shea, Jr.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Robert F. Shea, Jr.
Acting Administrator, Federal Insurance
and Mitigation Administration

Cc: The Honorable Ralph M. Hall
Ranking Minority Member
House Science Committee